

PARAEDUCATORS IN KENTUCKY

The Kentucky Department of Education developed this technical assistance document to provide information regarding the NCLB educational requirement for paraeducators. The document also contains information about the *Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment and Study Guide*.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) addresses educational qualifying factors for paraeducators. Specifically, **all** paraeducators working in a program supported with Title I-A funds must have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

New employees must also meet the NCLB educational requirement listed below before they are hired to provide instructional support in a program supported with Title I-A funds.

Paraeducators hired **on or before** January 8, 2002 and whose duties include instructional support in a program supported with Title I-A funds must also meet the NCLB educational requirement listed below by January 8, 2006.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Educational Requirement

Paraeducators whose duties include instructional support and who work in a program supported with Title I-A funds must meet the NCLB educational requirement through **one** of the following:

1. Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; **or**
2. Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; **or**
3. Met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).

Properly trained paraeducators play important roles in improving student achievement in schools where they can reinforce and extend instruction in the classroom. Unfortunately, studies often show that paraeducators are used for assisting in teaching although their educational backgrounds may not qualify them for such responsibilities. NCLB requires that paraeducators meet higher educational standards to ensure that students who need the most help are assisted by qualified paraeducators. The law also requires that high-quality and ongoing professional development be provided for paraeducators working in programs supported by Title I-A funds. The training should enable paraeducators to assist children in meeting the state's student academic achievement standards.

Programs Supported with Title I-A Funds

The following are programs supported with Title I-A funds:

1. A **schoolwide program** uses Title I-A funds together with federal, state and local funds to upgrade the entire educational program of a school. A school that is served by Title I-A and at least 40 percent of the children are from low-income families may be a schoolwide program. Title I funds support all teachers and paraeducators. In a schoolwide program, the educational requirement applies to **all** paraeducators, without regard to whether the positions are funded with federal, state or local funds.

2. A **targeted assistance school** uses Title I-A funds only for programs that provide supplemental services to eligible children identified as having the greatest need for special assistance. A school that is served by Title I-A and is ineligible or chooses not to be to a schoolwide program is a targeted assistance school. In a targeted assistance school, the educational requirement applies to paraeducators who are paid with Title I-A funds, but not to paraeducators paid with state or local funds.

Individuals Required to Meet the NCLB Educational Requirement

According to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education:

1. Paraeducators with instructional duties in any program supported by Title I-A funds must meet the NCLB educational requirement. Individuals who have both instructional and non-instructional duties must meet the NCLB educational requirement because they carry out some instructional support duties.
 - For a schoolwide program, **all** paraeducators with instructional duties must meet the NCLB educational requirement without regard to the source of funding of the positions. Paraeducators who provide instructional support to special education students and work in a schoolwide program must meet the NCLB educational requirement without regard to the source of funding that supports the positions.
 - For a targeted assistance school, **only** paraeducators with instructional duties who are paid with Title I-A funds must meet the NCLB educational requirement.
2. Paraeducators employed by the district to provide Title I-A instructional services to eligible private school students must meet the NCLB educational requirement.
3. Individuals who had been performing non-instructional duties and then become instructional paraeducators must meet the NCLB educational requirement. As existing employees of the district, the individuals would have until January 8, 2006 to demonstrate competency through post-secondary education or a formal academic assessment.

Individuals Not Required to Meet the NCLB Educational Requirement

According to guidance from the U.S. Department of Education:

1. Paraeducators who are proficient in English and a language other than English and act solely as translators for limited English proficient students are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
2. Paraeducators who work as interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
3. Paraeducators with duties that consist solely of conducting parental involvement activities are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
4. Paraeducators with instructional duties in a targeted assistance school that are funded through state or local funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
5. Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, and non-instructional computer assistance are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
6. Individuals who provide non-instructional support to special education students are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. This includes individuals who solely provide personal care services or serve as bus or health aides for special education students.

7. Paraeducators paid with funds under Title I-B (Student Reading Skills Improvement Grants), Title I-C (Education of Migratory Children) or Title I-D (Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk) are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement unless they work in a schoolwide program school or are paid, in whole or part, with Title I-A funds.
8. Individuals working in early childhood programs (such as Head Start or State funded preschool programs) that are physically located in a Title I-A school but are not a part of a schoolwide program and are not funded with Title I-A funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. However, the educational requirement would apply to paraeducators working in an early childhood program that is jointly funded with Title I-A funds and the paraeducator is paid with Title I-A funds.
9. Paraeducators working in schools (or districts) that do not receive Title I-A funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
10. AmeriCorps volunteers and other volunteers are not considered employees of districts and are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. However, even though the educational requirement does not apply, the district should make every effort to ensure that AmeriCorps volunteers who provide instructional support in a Title I program have the skills necessary to assist effectively in instructing reading, writing and mathematics.
11. Individuals working in 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. However, the requirement would apply to paraeducators paid with Title I-A funds in a 21st Century after-school program funded jointly with Title I funds in a targeted assistance school and to paraeducators working in a 21st Century after-school program that is part of a Title I schoolwide program. The educational requirement does not apply to staff of 21st Century programs that are not employees of the district.

New and Existing Employees

New employees must meet the NCLB educational requirement in order to be hired by the district if their duties include instructional support in a program supported with Title I-A funds. Existing employees with instructional duties in a program supported with Title I-A funds have until January 8, 2006, to meet the educational requirement. Persons that work as paraeducators in a non-Title I program and are then transferred to a Title I-A program are **not** considered new employees. A district has discretion to define its policies for distinguishing “new” and “existing” paraeducators in the case of paraeducators hired before January 8, 2002 but laid off and subsequently rehired after January 8, 2002. These policies might say, for example:

1. Paraeducators who are “pink-slipped” at the end of one school year and then rehired at the beginning of the next school year, with the result that they have continuous years of employment, are considered existing paraeducators, not new employees.
2. Individuals who have a break in service and are re-hired at some later point are considered new employees.

To provide consistency and ensure that all paraeducators are highly qualified, districts may choose to develop a policy in which **all** paraeducators with instructional duties are required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.

A district may, at its discretion, determine that a paraeducator meets the NCLB educational requirement if the individual was previously determined to meet the requirement when employed by another district. The district should request documentation from the previous employer.

Two Years of Study and Associate's Degree

A paraeducator may complete "two years of study at an institution of higher education" to meet the NCLB educational requirement. "Two years of study" means the equivalent of two years of full-time study as defined by the institution. For some institutions that may mean 12 credit hours per semester (requiring a total of 48 credit hours), while in others it may mean 15 credit hours a semester (requiring a total of 60 credit hours). A paraeducator may obtain an associate's (or higher) degree to meet the NCLB educational requirement. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) has developed an associate's degree for paraeducators.

While a paraeducator is not required to take a specific course of study, a paraeducator should be able to demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics or in readiness.

A district may count continuing education credits (CECs) toward the two years of study if the CECs are part of an overall training and development program plan and an institution of higher education accepts or translates them to course credit.

Formal Academic Assessments

For paraeducators who have not completed two years of post-secondary education or have not obtained an associate's degree, a formal state or local academic assessment may be used to meet the NCLB educational requirement. The assessment must assess the paraeducator's knowledge of and the ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). The purpose of the academic assessment is to demonstrate that paraeducators have the appropriate knowledge and ability to assist in instructing students and are competent in required instructional techniques and academic content areas.

The district must document and retain the results of the assessment. There needs to be a record of the assessment and the individual's performance on that assessment. The results of the assessment should establish the paraeducator's competence relative to the standard or target the areas where additional training and staff development may be needed to help the person succeed at meeting the standard.

A district must use the expanded *Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment* (KPA) unless the district has submitted the *Alternative Paraeducator Assessment Certification* to the Kentucky Department of Education certifying that the district will use a locally developed or selected assessment that meets **all** of criteria listed in the document. The district must submit a new certification if it changes the assessment used. It is not necessary to submit the certification if the KPA is used.

Email the certification to Louanna Tracy at ltracy@kde.state.ky.us. You will receive confirmation that the certification has been received. Keep a copy of the completed certification on file in the district office with documentation that all of the criteria apply to the assessment. The district must certify that **all** of the following criteria apply to the assessment:

1. The assessment tests the test-taker's knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics.

2. The assessment covers instructional techniques in order to test the test-taker's ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).
3. The content of the assessment reflects both Kentucky's academic standards and skills expected for a child at a given school level (elementary, middle, or high school), as well as the ability of the test-taker to assist in instructing students in the content.
4. The assessment is rigorous and objective.
5. The assessment has a minimum performance standard that the test-taker is expected to meet or exceed, and the same performance standard is applied to each test-taker.
6. The administration of the assessment includes procedures and guidelines for re-testing, test integrity, and detailed descriptions on how the test is administered.
7. The district will document and retain the results of each assessment. There will be a record of the assessment and the individual's performance on that assessment. The results will be documented, and the district will retain all documentation relative to the paraeducator meeting the NCLB educational requirement.

Information about the Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment

The *Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment* (KPA) was designed to assist paraeducators in meeting the NCLB educational requirement.

1. The KPA is administered at the district or center (such as Adult Education Center).
2. There is no cost to the district or test-taker (applicant or existing paraeducator) for the KPA.
3. The KPA is based on the KPA Study Guide. The Study Guide is available through district Title I offices, Adult Education Centers, and on the Kentucky Department of Education Website. Districts and centers may print and copy the Study Guide as appropriate.
4. The district or center should provide training using the KPA Study Guide before the assessment is administered. The training should be provided in a consistent manner to test-takers.
5. The KPA consists of four sections: Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Instructional Strategies. The Reading, Mathematics, and Writing sections assess the test-taker's knowledge of skills in these areas. The Instructional Strategies section assesses the test-taker's knowledge of Kentucky's system of education; instructional support for reading, mathematics, and writing; paraeducator roles and responsibilities; and instructional interventions.
6. Each section is comprised of 10 multiple-choice or true/false questions for a total of 40 questions on the KPA. The questions in each section are selected randomly from a bank of questions.
7. The KPA was piloted in two ways. The Reading, Mathematics, and Writing sections were piloted at community colleges with second year students. The Instructional Strategies section was piloted with paraeducators who work in schools.
8. No undue assistance may be provided during the assessment – no talking, no calculator, no web browsing, no use of a phone, and no use of the Study Guide. The test-taker may have blank paper and pencil/pen for scratch work.
9. The test-taker must correctly answer 28 out of 40 questions to pass the KPA. If a test-taker does not pass the KPA, she or he may retake the entire assessment 2 additional

times (for a total of 3). There may be reasons for which a district makes an exception and allows the test-taker to take the test more than 3 times. The reason must be documented at the local level. The district or center may provide additional training for test-takers that do not pass the KPA.

10. When administering paper copies of the KPA, the district or center should maintain the completed answer sheet and the KPA results sheet with the score for each section and the total score. The test-taker should be provided a copy of the KPA results sheet. The test-taker should **not** be given a copy of his or her completed answer sheet.
11. The district may make accommodations as needed for test-takers with disabilities to take the assessment.

Skills and Instructional Strategies Covered by the Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment

The following is a brief description of the general categories of skills and strategies covered on the KPA:

Reading

1. **Literal Comprehension** – Questions focus on the content of the message or passage that is directly stated and may ask about the main idea of the passage; supporting details or ideas; the organization of the passage or statement; the use of language in the passage or statement; and the meanings of words presented in the passage or statement.
2. **Critical and Inferential Comprehension** – Questions go beyond the explicit content to the implied meanings or underlying reasons for the statements. Questions focus on strengths or weaknesses of the author's argument; relevance or appropriateness of the evidence the author presented to support the argument; what is fact and what is opinion; inferences that can be drawn from the passage or statement; the attitude of the author toward the subject matter discussed; the ideas or situations are extensions of the material presented in the passage; conclusions that can be drawn from the passage or statement.

Mathematics

3. **Conceptual Knowledge** – Questions focus on the order among whole numbers, fractions, and decimals; numeration and place value; and operation properties (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division).
4. **Procedural Knowledge** – Questions focus on computation, estimation, ratio, proportion, percent, and equations.
5. **Representations of Quantitative Information** – Questions focus on reading and interpreting graphs and charts and making predictions and inferences from data.
6. **Measurement and Informal Geometry** – Questions focus on customary and metric systems of measurement and solving measurement problems (i.e., linear, area, and volume).

Writing

7. **Usage** – Questions focus on the ability to recognize errors in verb tense, pronoun-antecedent agreement, parallel structure, subject-verb agreement, coordinator, subordination, punctuation, capitalization, and other conventions of standard written English.

8. **Sentence Correction** – Questions focus on the best way to rewrite phrases or sentences. Questions present faults in the logic or structure of the sentence and would normally require substantial rewriting. In the assessment, the test-taker is asked to select the best revision offered by reviewing the effectiveness of the expression as well as correctness.

Instructional Strategies

9. **Roles and Responsibilities** – Questions focus on paraeducator vs. teacher responsibilities, communication, and confidentiality.
10. Kentucky's Educational System – Questions focus on those components required by law.
11. **Instructional Interventions** – Questions focus on the following instructional interventions: reinforcement in which teachers and paraeducators seek to teach and assist students in learning the necessary skills to participate in the community; shaping, a technique that rewards each successfully completed step of the desired behavior or skill; modeling which requires the paraeducator to demonstrate the skill or behavior by actions; task analysis, a technique that breaks a task down into its component parts; prompting, a technique that provides varying degrees of guidance to the students as they practice their newly learned skills and may utilize more than one approach; and tutoring in which the paraeducator assists the professional educator (teacher) by providing assistance to one or more students for achievement of instructional objectives.

Overview of Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment Study Guide

1. The booklet is designed as a study guide for the *Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment* (KPA). It provides the test-taker (applicant or existing paraeducator) with information about the role of the paraeducator and strategies for assisting with student instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics.
2. The Study Guide is also designed as a tool to provide the paraeducator strategies for working with teachers and students in the instructional setting as a beginning to on-going professional development.
3. The KPA covers material contained in the following sections of the KPA Study Guide: Kentucky's System of Education, Reading (Knowledge and Instructional Support), Mathematics (Knowledge and Instructional Support), Writing (Knowledge and Instructional Support), Paraeducator Roles and Responsibilities, and Instructional Interventions. Information in the appendices is covered in the appropriate sections of the assessment.
4. The Study Guide also contains Study Tips and Test-Taking Strategies.

Allowable Duties for Paraeducators

Paraeducators providing instructional support in a program supported with Title I-A funds must work under the **direct supervision** of a teacher. For a schoolwide program, **all** paraeducators with instructional duties must work under the direct supervision of a teacher. For a targeted assistance school, **only** paraeducators with instructional duties who are paid with Title I-A funds must work under the direct supervision of a teacher. Direct supervision of a teacher is considered to be:

1. The teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities the paraeducator carries out and evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraeducator is working; and

2. The paraeducator works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher.

A program where a paraeducator provides instructional support and a teacher visits a site once or twice a week but otherwise is not in the classroom would be inconsistent with the requirement that paraeducators work in close and frequent proximity to a teacher. A program where a paraeducator works with a group of students in another location while the teacher provides instruction to the rest of the class would also be inconsistent with the requirement that paraeducators work in close and frequent proximity to a teacher.

Because paraeducators provide instructional support, they should **not** be providing planned direct instruction or introducing to students new skills, concepts or academic content. Paraeducators working in a program supported with Title I-A funds may provide the following services, under the supervision of teachers or other licensed personnel:

1. Provide one-on-one tutoring for eligible students, if the tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would **not** otherwise receive instruction from a teacher;
2. Assist with classroom management such as by organizing instructional materials;
3. Provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory;
4. Conduct parent involvement activities;
5. Provide instructional support in a library or media center;
6. Act as a translator; **or**
7. Provide instructional services to students under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher.

Paraeducators who provide services to eligible private school students and are employed by the district must be under the direct supervision of a highly qualified public school teacher throughout the duration of the services/program being offered.

Paraeducators hired by a third-party contractor to work in a Title I program must work under the direct supervision of a teacher. That teacher does not have to meet the teacher qualification requirement if the third party contractor also employs the teacher.

Paraeducators providing instructional support in a program supported with Title I-A funds may assume limited duties that are assigned to similar personnel who are not working in a program supported with Title I-A funds. The limited duties include duties beyond classroom instruction or duties that do not benefit participating children. The amount of time spent on limited duties must be the same proportion of total work time as that of instructional staff at the same school.

Funding Issues

Several federal programs provide funds that local school districts may use to provide professional development for paraeducators.

1. Title I-A funds may be used to support ongoing training and professional development to assist teachers and paraeducators working in a program supported with Title I-A funds. Title I-A funds may also be used for professional development to help paraeducators become certified and licensed teachers.
2. Title II-A (Teacher Quality Program) funds may be used to provide professional development activities that improve the knowledge of teachers and principals and, in appropriate cases, paraeducators concerning effective instructional strategies, methods and skills and use of challenging content standards to improve teaching practices and

student academic achievement. Title II-A funds may also be used for professional development to help paraeducators become certified and licensed teachers.

3. Title III-A (English Language Acquisition) funds may be used to provide professional development for teachers and other instructional personnel providing instruction to students need English language acquisition and language enhancement.
4. Title V-A (Innovative Programs) funds may be used to provide professional development for teachers and other school personnel as a part of reform strategies.

Questions

Contact the Title I staff in the Kentucky Department of Education at (502) 564-3791 if you have questions.

Additional information regarding requirements for paraeducators may be found in Section 1119 of *the No Child Left Behind Act* and the U.S. Department of Education *Paraprofessional Guidance* (March 1, 2004)

ALTERNATIVE PARAEDUCATOR ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATION

For paraeducators who have not completed 2 years of post-secondary education or have not obtained an associate's degree, a formal state or local academic assessment may be used to meet the NCLB educational requirement. Districts must use the expanded *Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment* (KPA) unless the district has submitted this certification to the Kentucky Department of Education to use a locally developed or selected assessment. The district must submit a new certification if it changes the assessment used. It is **not** necessary to submit a certification if the KPA is used.

Email this certification to Louanna Tracy at ltracy@kde.state.ky.us. You will receive confirmation that the certification has been received. Keep a copy of the completed certification on file in the district office with documentation that all of the criteria apply to the assessment.

District	
Superintendent's (or Designee's) Name	
Date of Certification	
Name of Assessment	

Please check the statement that applies to the assessment:

<input type="checkbox"/> This is a locally designed assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> This is a commercial assessment
--	--

The purpose of the academic assessment is to demonstrate that paraeducators have the appropriate knowledge and ability to assist in instructing students and are competent in required instructional techniques and academic content areas. The district certifies that **all** of the following criteria apply to the assessment:

1. The assessment tests the test-taker's knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics.
2. The assessment covers instructional techniques in order to test the test-taker's ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).
3. The content of the assessment reflects both Kentucky's academic standards and skills expected for a child at a given school level (elementary, middle, or high school), as well as the ability of the test-taker to assist in instructing students in the content.
4. The assessment is rigorous and objective.
5. The assessment has a minimum performance standard that the test-taker is expected to meet or exceed, and the same performance standard is applied to each test-taker.
6. The administration of the assessment includes procedures and guidelines for re-testing, test integrity, and detailed descriptions on how the test is administered.
7. The district will document and retain the results of the assessment. There will be a record of the assessment and the individual's performance on that assessment. The results will be documented, and the district will retain all documentation relative to the paraeducator meeting the NCLB educational requirement.